

Project Northland

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Program developers or their agents provided the Model Program information below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Project Northland is a multilevel parent, school, and communitywide program designed to be alcohol specific but has proven also to significantly reduce marijuana and tobacco use. The program utilizes peer-led, experiential activity-driven learning strategies to involve students. Parents are enlisted to support a “no-use” message, communities are organized to reduce youth access to alcohol and promote alcohol-free norms for youth.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Project Northland was developed at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology, and evaluated with a grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The evaluation was the largest and most rigorous alcohol-use prevention trial ever funded by NIAAA, and Project Northland was shown to be effective in delaying and reducing alcohol use among young adolescents. After the initial evaluation, the program underwent extensive pilot testing in a comparable Minnesota community, and revisions were made prior to implementation.

RECOGNITION

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Model Program

U.S. Department of Education: Exemplary Program

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice: Promising Program

Drug Strategies, Making the Grade: Rated “A”



INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE CLASSIFICATION (IOM)

UNIVERSAL

Developed for universal audiences.

INTERVENTION TYPE

SCHOOL-BASED

CONTENT FOCUS

ALCOHOL, ILLEGAL DRUGS, TOBACCO, PARENT COMPONENT

This program targets alcohol to delay the age at which youth begin drinking, reduce alcohol use among those already drinking, and limit the number of alcohol-related problems of young drinkers.

Parent involvement as adjunct strategy:

The *Slick Tracy Home Team* Program involves primary caregivers or trusted adults in carrying out activities based on four comics that go home with the students. The research showed a 90 percent parent participation rate in this activity, which provided a format to discuss alcohol-related issues with sixth graders. The program also provides for parents attending a Poster Night Fair where the students discuss the alcohol exhibits/posters/projects they have completed as part of the program.

Amazing Alternatives! provides for a parent's night out of alcohol-free activities as well as Northland Notes for Parents that educate parents about alcohol issues and alcohol-free alternatives.

PowerLines provides opportunities for the students to become involved in community issues, and this includes educating and involving the parents. Students complete community projects designed to raise awareness in the community about alcohol issues and young people and that support community involvement.

Supercharged! contains all of the parent and community strategies that were used in this scientifically based program to support non-use for underage students, reduce youth access, affect public policy, and change community norms.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, PEER, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, SOCIETY

INDIVIDUAL

- Problem-solving skills
- Promotion of social competence
- Cooperation
- Attachment to parents and other caring adults
- Belief in society's values

FAMILY

- Frequent and consistent communication with parents
- Presence of a significant adult
- Strong parental guidance
- Parent involvement in homework and school-related activities

PEER

- Responsible behavior modeled by peer group/leader
- Stronger association with peers who are involved in school, recreation, service, religion, or other organized activities

SCHOOL

- Sense of community in the classroom
- Clear standards and rules for appropriate behavior
- Youth participation, involvement, and responsibility in school tasks
- School bonding

COMMUNITY

- Caring/support from community
- Opportunities for youth to participate in community activities

SOCIETY

- Media literacy

RISK FACTORS

INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, PEER, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, SOCIETY

INDIVIDUAL

- Inadequate life skills
- Lack of peer-refusal skills
- Favorable attitudes toward alcohol use
- Lack of school bonding

FAMILY

- Family attitudes that favor alcohol use
- Poor child supervision and discipline
- Inconsistent rules and consequences related to alcohol use

PEER

- Association with delinquent peers and peers who reject mainstream activities
- Susceptibility to negative peer pressure

SCHOOL

- Inconsistent rules and consequences related to alcohol use
- Lack of school bonding
- Favorable staff and student attitudes toward alcohol use

COMMUNITY

- Community disorganization
- Lack of community bonding
- Community attitudes favor alcohol use
- Inadequate youth services and opportunity for youth involvement in the community

SOCIETY

- Pro-alcohol use messages in the media

INTERVENTIONS BY DOMAIN

INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, PEER, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, SOCIETY

INDIVIDUAL

- Life/social skills training

FAMILY

- Parent education/parenting skills training
- Task-oriented family education sessions to improve family interactions (e.g., parent involvement in program homework assignments, etc.)

PEER

- Peer-resistance education
- Peer development of no-use norms

SCHOOL

- Classroom drug education
- Classroom-based skills development

COMMUNITY

- Establishment of supervised youth recreational and cultural programs
- Multiagency activities and collaboration

SOCIETY

- Enforcement of tobacco and alcohol sales laws
- Media education to counter alcohol and tobacco advertising
- Public service announcements warning of dangers of drug use and other risk-taking behaviors

KEY PROGRAM APPROACHES

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, IN-SCHOOL CURRICULA, PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS, PEER LEADERSHIP, COUNSELING OR SUPPORT, SKILL DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Supercharged! is an action manual for parents and community that includes strategies to involve parents and communities in the program. Strategies include Northland Notes for Parents that relay to parents the messages students are learning in the classroom; technical assistance materials for holding an *Amazing Alternatives!* Fun Night; soliciting local businesses to help provide awards to students who agree not to use substances, provide community service, and achieve academic goals; and forming a Community Task Force that will work to reduce both social and commercial youth access to alcohol.

IN-SCHOOL CURRICULA

Slick Tracy Home Team includes materials for teachers and peer leaders to introduce the comic book approach to the students and to follow up with in-school discussions about each home activity. It also provides technical assistance materials for conducting the Slick Tracy Poster Fair as a closing activity.

Amazing Alternatives! teaches seventh graders skills to identify and resist influences to use alcohol and to encourage alcohol-free alternatives, resist and counter advertising influences, learn facts about consequences of use, and develop positive peer influences not to use. Teaching strategies for teacher-led sessions include fact sheets, role-plays, games, worksheets, discussions, and audiotapes.

PowerLines is an in-school curriculum that teaches students how communities influence behavior and how to change communities. It includes instructions for both peer leaders and teachers to lead each of the sessions and for students to conduct up to 20 different community-based projects that involve data collection; media analysis; forming a community task force and using policy solutions; media literacy and working with the media; learning about policies and laws; normative youth behavior; and youth organizations that support reduction in alcohol abuse.

PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS

Slick Tracy Home Team provides sixth grade youth and parents an opportunity to discuss alcohol-related issues. It includes a set of comic book materials for use at home to stimulate discussion between parent and child.

PEER LEADERSHIP, COUNSELING OR SUPPORT

Peer-led training is involved at the sixth and seventh grade level. Each class elects peer leaders at the beginning of the age-appropriate sessions, and the peer leaders receive specific training to lead the small group activities, in collaboration with the teacher.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Amazing Alternatives! and *PowerLines* address resistance skills and skills to conduct community analysis and participate in community-based initiatives.

HOW IT WORKS

Project Northland consists of four components:

- **Slick Tracy Home Team Program** has sixth grade students and their parents complete fun and educational activities at home. This "home team" approach provides a forum for the students and their families to discuss alcohol-related issues using the Slick Tracy comic book series during the eight 45-minute classroom sessions. Students create posters and exhibits about alcohol and explain them to the parents attending Slick Tracy Poster Fair.
- **Amazing Alternatives!** provides curriculum for eight 45-minute teacher- and peer-led classroom sessions. It is designed to teach seventh graders the skills to identify and resist influences to use alcohol and to encourage alcohol-free alternatives.
- **PowerLines** features eight 45-minute sessions that are part of a 4-week program for eighth grade students. It teaches students how communities influence behavior and how they can create changes in communities.
- **Supercharged!** includes strategies that worked in Project Northland communities and provides schools with materials and a framework that can help them get parents and communities involved to reduce youth access to alcohol. Youth are placed in a leadership role to support healthy activities and initiatives.

Successful replication of the Project Northland model requires:

- Student involvement from sixth through eighth grades
 - Teacher and peer training (recommended to maintain implementation fidelity)
 - Incorporation of student-selected peer leaders at all three grade levels
 - A community member task force
 - Program coordinator
-

OUTCOMES

DECREASES IN SUBSTANCE USE, REDUCTIONS IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO RISK FACTORS, IMPROVEMENTS IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO PROTECTIVE FACTORS, OTHER TYPES OF OUTCOMES

DECREASES IN SUBSTANCE USE

Outcomes for baseline nonusers at the end of eighth grade in comparison with the control group:

- 28% reduction in monthly drinking.
- 46% reduction in weekly drinking.
- 37% lower rate of cigarette smoking.
- 50% lower rate of marijuana use.

Outcomes for the intervention group at the end of eighth grade in comparison with the control group:

- 20% reduction in monthly drinking.
- 30% reduction in weekly drinking.
- 27% reduction in both alcohol and tobacco combined use.

REDUCTIONS IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO RISK FACTORS

Individual domain: inadequate life skills; lack of peer-refusal skills; favorable attitudes toward alcohol use; lack of school bonding.

Family domain: family attitudes that favor alcohol use; poor child supervision and discipline; inconsistent rules and consequences related to alcohol use.

School domain: inconsistent rules and consequences related to alcohol use; lack of school bonding; favorable staff and student attitudes toward alcohol use.

IMPROVEMENTS IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Better parent-child communication about the consequences of alcohol use

The intervention group felt less peer pressure to use alcohol

OTHER TYPES OF OUTCOMES

Peer influences moved in a positive direction of non-use.

Students' normative expectations shifted to more realistically reflect the numbers of students who do not use.

Students reported greater self-efficacy at parties.

Students' positive attitudes toward use became more negative.

Both parents and students reported increased communication around alcohol issues.

Benefits

Teaches youth decision making and interpersonal skills

Enhances parenting skills

Strengthens peer, parent, and community no-use norms

Has a positive effect on other substance use

Reduces youth access to alcohol

EVALUATION DESIGN

The Project Northland evaluation involved approximately 2,400 students from 24 school districts in northeastern Minnesota during their sixth, seventh, and eighth grade years (1991 to 1994), and included children from seven area American Indian reservations. This area has the highest rate of alcohol-related problems in the State. Twenty-four school districts were recruited systematically and four smaller school districts were combined with nearby districts to ensure an adequate sample size in each unit to be randomized. These combined districts were blocked by size and randomized to an intervention condition (n=10) or a reference condition (n=10). The population of the six participating counties was 235,000; 94 percent of the students were White, while American Indian students constituted about 5.5 percent of the study's cohort. Because of their small number, analyses of intervention effects within this subgroup were not possible. This area is predominantly rural and lower-middle class to middle class.

DELIVERY SPECIFICATIONS

0–4 WEEKS

Amount of time required to deliver the program to obtain documented outcomes:

Slick Tracy Home Team: Eight sessions, 45 minutes each.

Amazing Alternatives!: Eight sessions, 45 minutes each.

PowerLines: Eight sessions, 45 minutes each over 4 weeks.

Supercharged!: Community mobilization (time and labor intensive, impossible to predict).

Successful replication of the Project Northland model requires student involvement from sixth through eighth grades.

INTENDED SETTING

RURAL, URBAN, SUBURBAN, TRIBAL RESERVATION

This program was researched in rural, primarily White settings and with seven American Indian reservations. Project Northland has been successfully implemented in urban, suburban, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American, and African American settings.

FIDELITY

Components that must be included in order to achieve the same outcomes cited by the developer:

The developer requires:

Student involvement from the sixth through eighth grade.

Teacher and peer training to maintain implementation fidelity.

Incorporation of peer-selected peer leaders at all three grade levels.

A staggered implementation timeline over 3 years: *Slick Tracy*, year one; *Amazing Alternatives!*, year two; *PowerLines*, year three. Community mobilization can be inserted in any of the 3 years, depending on community readiness.

Optional components or strategies and how they were determined to be optional:

Community involvement and coalition as described in *Supercharged!*

BARRIERS AND PROBLEMS

Problem: All program materials can be duplicated except the comics used in *Slick Tracy*, sixth grade. New comics must be repurchased for each new sixth grade class participating in the program.

Solution: Communities have solicited corporate and community organizations for donations to purchase the comics. The sponsors are able to have their names placed on the front of the comic. Also, National Guard units can be of assistance in this area.

Problem: Funding is always a problem.

Solution: Hazelden actively searches for grant opportunities and will assist a community in writing a grant to implement Project Northland for no charge.

PERSONNEL

FULL TIME, PART TIME, PAID, VOLUNTEER

A Project Northland program coordinator oversees implementation of all phases of the program and trains teachers. Community organization trainers and youth organization workers are needed to conduct the program in school and in community and after-school settings. Personnel need to be comfortable and experienced at facilitating small-group experiential learning settings, utilizing peer leaders.

Typical personnel problems encountered by users when implementing this Model Program and potential solutions:

This program has been adapted to various community and school issues around the country. Law enforcement officers can be trained to provide the peer leader training for *Slick Tracy*, sixth grade, and *Amazing Alternatives!*, seventh grade. The peer leaders can be trained whenever the school can make time available. Law enforcement can be trained to conduct *Slick Tracy*. However, it is not recommended that they conduct the eighth grade components unless they are highly skilled facilitators.

EDUCATION

UNDERGRADUATE, SPECIAL SKILLS

Teachers deliver the classroom program; community resources need only be capable of contributing as needed.

PERSONNEL TRAINING

Type: SEMINAR/WORKSHOP, Location: ONSITE (user)/OFFSITE (developer or trainer location), Length: BASIC

The program can be purchased and implemented without training. However, it is strongly recommended that the program coordinator and key teachers and community leaders be trained in all three school curricula, as well as the peer leader training and the parent and community involvement components. Participants are then certified to train additional direct providers of the curricula for grades six to eight.

Training for *Slick Tracy Home Team Program*, *Amazing Alternatives!*, *PowerLines*, and the *Community Mobilization Overview* requires 3 days. If training for *Supercharged!* is included, it requires 4 days. Training can be staggered over a 3-year implementation cycle. If so, 2 days of training per year are recommended but can be altered, depending on the community's individual needs.

Peer leadership training requires 3 hours for sixth grade and 4 hours for seventh grade. It teaches the peer leaders how to lead the classroom small-group activities with their peers, in collaboration with the teacher.

A separate *Community Mobilization* training can be contracted to last 1 to 2 days, depending on community readiness. This training involves key leaders of the community ascertaining alcohol problems in the community and strategies and organization to reduce youth access and affect public policy.

COST (estimated in U.S. dollars)

\$5,001–10,000

Cost considerations for implementing this program with 1 teacher and 30 students, as recommended by the developer:

MATERIALS

Project Northland Alcohol Prevention Curriculum, complete set (*Slick Tracy*, *Amazing Alternatives!*, *PowerLines*, and *Supercharged!*) \$755

Slick Tracy, including binder, teacher's guide, 30 sets of 4 comic books, 30 envelopes, 1 poster \$245

Amazing Alternatives!, including 3-ring binder, teacher's guide, 4 audiotapes, 1 blackboard game, 2 posters \$245

PowerLines, including 3-ring binder, teacher's manual, 1 audiotape \$245

Supercharged!, including 1 teacher's manual, 30 student handbooks, 3 posters, 1 game pack \$245

Pretest/posttest form is available, if specifically requested (not included in the training packages)

TRAINING

Contact Hazelden

INTENDED AGE GROUP

CHILDHOOD (5–11), EARLY ADOLESCENT (12–14)

Developed for sixth to eighth grade students, 10 to 14 years of age.

INTENDED POPULATION

AFRICAN AMERICAN, ASIAN AMERICAN, HISPANIC/LATINO, AMERICAN INDIAN, WHITE

The original research was done with primarily White students and seven American Indian reservations. The program has now been successfully duplicated in rural, suburban, and urban settings with African American, Asian American, and Hispanic/Latino populations.

GENDER FOCUS

BOTH GENDERS

Developed for male and female students.

REPLICATION INFORMATION

Project Northland has been replicated in Kankakee, IL.

A replication of Project Northland is currently under way through a National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism grant in Chicago.

A Project Northland study is being conducted by the University of Minnesota in Russia.

Vermont replaced DARE with Project Northland and has used it for 3 years.

Missouri replaced DARE with Project Northland but has only used it with sixth graders.

West Palm Beach, FL, has implemented all 3 years of the program in a multi-cultural setting.

Yamhill County, OR, has also implemented the program utilizing high school leaders to conduct the program in lower grades.

Additional intended settings where the program has been implemented:

Dr. Perry has recently completed a project extending Project Northland into 1 year of high school. The program is titled *Class Action*. It will be published September 2002.

Other features of the Model Program that were altered or affected by the implementation:

The program has been altered to encompass after-school settings, involvement of high school leaders to teach younger students, facilitation by law enforcement, etc.

CONTACT INFORMATION

ABOUT THE DEVELOPER

The program was developed at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology, beginning in 1991. Original developers were Cheryl Perry, Ph.D., and Carolyn Williams, Ph.D. Currently, the program is distributed through Hazelden Publishing and Education Services in Center City, MN.

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